

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Hebrews 09: 01-05

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Hebrews Chapter 9, and today we will read verses 1-5.

Chapters 1 to 7 of Hebrews spoke of how Christ's person is superior to the angels, His leadership is superior to Moses and Joshua, and His priesthood is superior to Aaron's. Chapter 8 then shifts from Christ's office to His work—how the New Covenant He established is better than the Old Covenant and will replace it. The New Covenant writes the Lord's laws on the hearts of the saints so that they do not need others to teach them, for each person can directly know the Lord and receive His complete forgiveness.

Chapter 9 follows the trend of thought from Chapter 8, further explaining that the New Covenant involves the offering of a better sacrifice and more precious blood, which have the complete effect of removing sin. The author's burden is to encourage the Hebrew believers to appreciate the superiority of the New Covenant and not return to Judaism, which was established under the Old Covenant. Therefore, the author begins with the tabernacle and sacrificial ordinances familiar to the Hebrew believers, then leads them to what Christ accomplished in the New Covenant, demonstrating its supremacy.

In Hebrews 9:1–5, which is our passage for today, the author briefly describes the Old Testament tabernacle. Since the Hebrew believers were well acquainted with Old Testament ordinances, the author gives only a brief overview. However, most believers today have not carefully read Exodus and Leviticus, so we will provide additional explanations regarding the tabernacle.

Verse 1: "Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary."

The last verse of Chapter 8 states that the first covenant is becoming obsolete, growing old, and is ready to vanish away. This verse continues that discussion, stating that the Old Covenant had ordinances of worship and an earthly sanctuary. The ordinances of worship refer to the regulations concerning priests assisting the people in offering sacrifices and gifts. The sanctuary refers to the tabernacle covered by curtains and veils, including the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

In the outer court of the tabernacle were the bronze altar and the laver. The priests offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings on the bronze altar. Before serving, they had to wash their hands and feet in the laver. Thus, the outer court was an important place for priestly service. However, the author does not mention the priestly service in the outer court at all. He only refers to the tabernacle itself, calling it an "earthly sanctuary".

We cannot be completely certain of the author's intent, but perhaps he wanted to emphasize Christ's priesthood—His ministry in the true tabernacle in heaven after His resurrection and ascension. The priestly service in the outer court of the tabernacle foreshadowed Christ's earthly ministry, for He is the Passover Lamb that was slain. That work has been completed, and the great work of redemption has been accomplished. Christ's earthly ministry laid the foundation for His priestly service in the heavenly true tabernacle, where He continues to serve the saints of the New Covenant.

Since the author is emphasizing Christ's priestly ministry in the true tabernacle in heaven, he contrasts it with the earthly tabernacle, calling the latter an "earthly sanctuary". The earthly tabernacle was constructed by Moses according to God's revelation on Mount Sinai. After receiving God's instructions, Moses led the Israelites to build it exactly as God had shown him on the mountain. It was made of physical materials and constructed by human hands. Therefore, its nature was earthly—it was in the world and temporary. It was a type of the true tabernacle in

heaven. Since it was a type, it was merely a shadow and not the reality, and when the true tabernacle came, the shadow had to be replaced.

Verse 2: "For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary."

The "tabernacle was prepared" refers to the tabernacle that was completed in the time of Moses. In Exodus 25, Moses ascended Mount Sinai for the first time and was with God for forty days and nights, receiving the revelation for the construction of the tabernacle. In Exodus 34, Moses ascended Mount Sinai a second time for another forty days and nights, and when he descended, his face shone. Starting from Exodus 35, Moses led the Israelites in building the tabernacle according to the pattern revealed by God on the mountain. When the tabernacle was completed in Exodus 40, the glory of the Lord filled the entire tabernacle.

This completed tabernacle had two veils. Passing through the first veil led to the Holy Place, where only priests, after wearing their priestly garments and washing themselves in the laver, could enter. On the south side of the Holy Place was the golden lampstand, and on the north side was the table of showbread, which held twelve loaves of bread in two stacks of six. Because the Hebrew believers were familiar with the Old Testament and the Aaronic priesthood, the author does not elaborate further. However, for New Testament believers, although we do not need to return to Old Testament worship ordinances, we should still understand their spiritual significance, for they all point to Christ and His ministry to New Testament believers.

The golden lampstand was hammered out of one talent of gold. It had a central shaft with three branches on each side, making a total of seven branches. Each branch was hammered to form cups, bulbs, and flowers, with an oil lamp at the top of each branch. The priests had to tend the lamps daily to keep them burning continually, for the lampstand provided the only light in the Holy Place. The golden lampstand is a type of the church. In Revelation 1, John saw a vision on the island

of Patmos in which the Son of Man walked among seven golden lampstands. Revelation 1:20 says, “The seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

The golden lampstand was made of pure gold. Gold, from God’s perspective, represents His eternal life; from man’s perspective, it represents accepting God’s life by faith. The golden lampstand was the only item in the tabernacle made entirely of pure gold—other items were mostly acacia wood overlaid with gold. Since the lampstand represents the church, this signifies that the church, as the body of Christ, must be wholly of Christ to be truly His church.

The lampstand was hammered from one talent of gold, meaning it was formed through the Holy Spirit’s repeated work of refining and shaping. The hammering produced cups, signifying an experience of being emptied; bulbs, signifying being filled with the Holy Spirit; and flowers, signifying the revelation of the glory of the Son of God. The golden lampstand also emits light, shining in a crooked and perverse generation, just as Philippians 2:15–16 says: “that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.”

The table of showbread was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. When Christ ministered on earth, He appeared outwardly as a perfect man, yet within Him was the second person of the Divine Trinity—His deity was hidden within His humanity. After Christ completed His earthly ministry, resurrected, and ascended, He fully revealed His divine glory, yet still retained the experiences of His human life.

Thus, Hebrews 4:15–16 says: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” When Christ serves as the High Priest in heaven, He is like the table of showbread—acacia wood overlaid with gold.

The twelve loaves on the table symbolize Christ as the bread of life. These loaves were replaced every Sabbath, and only priests could eat the old bread in the Holy Place. Today, all believers are a royal priesthood. Each Lord’s Day, we come to church

to offer new showbread and partake of the Lord's Supper together, remembering Him and sharing the spiritual nourishment of His words experienced throughout the week.

Therefore, every saint must follow the Lord's command and remember Him once a week. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:23-24, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'"

Verse 3: "And behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All,"

To enter the Holy Place, one must pass through the first veil. Between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, there was a second veil. In the Old Testament, the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place only once a year on the Day of Atonement, as recorded in Leviticus 16:32-33, "And the priest who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly." The high priest had to first make atonement for himself and then for the people, bringing the blood of the sin offering into the Most Holy Place and sprinkling it on the mercy seat before he could enter the Most Holy Place once a year to meet with God.

When Jesus was crucified, Matthew 27:50-51 records, "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." From that moment, there was no longer a veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. This marked a significant difference between the New and Old Covenants.

After describing the lampstand, the table, and the showbread in the Holy Place, the author then shifts focus to the items inside the Most Holy Place.

Verse 4: "which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;"

Inside the Most Holy Place were the golden censer and the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant was undoubtedly placed inside the Most Holy Place. However, the author also mentions the golden censer. Based on the original text, it is more appropriate to translate this as the golden altar of incense, as it was the place where the priests burned incense. In Exodus 40, when the tabernacle was set up, Moses placed each item inside the tabernacle in its designated position. Exodus 40:3 states that Moses first placed the ark of the testimony inside the Most Holy Place and then hung up the veil to separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Therefore, the only object inside the Most Holy Place should have been the ark of the covenant.

Next, Moses set up the items inside the Holy Place, including the table for the showbread and the golden lampstand. In Exodus 40:5, it states that Moses "set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony." Clearly, the golden altar of incense was placed in the Holy Place, positioned directly in front of the ark, with only the veil separating them. The golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant are often mentioned together. For example, in Exodus 30, when the instructions for making the golden altar of incense were given, Exodus 30:6 states, "And you shall put it before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you." This clearly indicates that the golden altar of incense was to be placed in front of the ark's mercy seat, outside the veil.

Leviticus 16:13 describes the Day of Atonement when the high priest was about to enter the Most Holy Place: "And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die." The high priest had to burn incense on the golden altar in the Holy Place so

that the cloud of incense would pass through the veil and cover the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. Only then could he enter the Most Holy Place with the blood of the sacrifice. Typologically, incense represents the prayers of man to God, while the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant represents God speaking to man. Placing these two together signifies the communication between man and God.

In the Old Testament, this means of communication was highly restricted. The high priest could come before God through incense burning and sacrifice only once a year on the Day of Atonement. However, in the New Testament, because Jesus Christ has died on the cross for the sins of mankind, the separating veil was torn from top to bottom, and there is no longer a veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Now, through prayer, people can come directly before the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant and communicate with God. Perhaps this is why the author of Hebrews places the golden altar of incense inside the Most Holy Place, together with the ark of the covenant.

The ark of the covenant was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. In Exodus 25, when God revealed to Moses the instructions for building the tabernacle, the first item He revealed was the ark, showing that this was the central focus of God's revelation. The ark of the covenant is also called the ark of the Testimony or the ark of the covenant. It measured two and a half cubits in length, one and a half cubits in width, and one and a half cubits in height, making it the only item in the entire tabernacle where every measurement was a half measurement—its length was half of five cubits, its width was half of three cubits, and its height was also half. This signifies that God's testimony requires human cooperation to be complete.

Inside the ark were three items: the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.

Manna was the food that God provided daily for the Israelites in the wilderness. Exodus 16:33-34 states, "And Moses said to Aaron, 'Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.' As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept." For

New Testament believers, manna represents the spiritual nourishment that God provides daily to sustain our spiritual growth.

Aaron's rod that budded is recorded in Numbers 17. After Korah's rebellion, God affirmed Aaron's priesthood. God commanded Moses to collect twelve rods from the leaders of Israel's twelve tribes, with each leader's name inscribed on his rod, and Aaron's name on the rod of Levi. Moses placed these twelve rods before the ark inside the tabernacle. The next day, when Moses went before the ark, he found that Aaron's rod had budded, sprouted blossoms, and even yielded ripe almonds.

Numbers 17:10 states, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die.'" For New Testament believers, Christ, as our High Priest, supplies us with resurrection life. This life brings authority—it enables us to submit to Christ's authority and also to represent His authority, shepherding God's church according to His will.

The two tablets of the covenant bore the Ten Commandments. When Moses spent forty days and nights with God on the mountain, he came down with these tablets, and his face shone. Deuteronomy 10:5 recounts, "Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the Lord commanded me." Moses placed these two stone tablets, inscribed with the Ten Commandments, inside the ark of the covenant.

In the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments were God's requirements for the people of Israel. In the New Testament, the Lord has written His law on the tablets of the hearts of the saints and, through the law of the Spirit of life, enables the saints to live a life that aligns with God's will.

Verse 5: "and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail."

On the cover of the ark, a mercy seat was to be made of pure gold, with dimensions equal to those of the ark's lid, completely covering the ark. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place with the blood of the sacrificial animal and sprinkle it on the mercy seat. This foreshadowed that the blood of Christ would fully cover and satisfy the righteous requirements and accusations of God's law. Therefore, it is also called the propitiation seat, allowing people to come before God by the grace of Christ. On the mercy seat, two cherubim made of pure gold were to be placed, with their wings spread high and their faces turned toward each other, facing the mercy seat. The cherubim represent the glory of God, signifying that the blood of Christ satisfies the demands of God's holiness, righteousness, and glory, enabling people to come before Him with confidence.

"Of these things we cannot now speak in detail." The author's purpose was to remind the Hebrew saints that Christ had already come, and these Old Testament types were passing away; therefore, he did not elaborate further. Although we have spoken more about them, we have focused on the Old Testament typology and their spiritual meanings, but we can only touch on them briefly. If the saints wish to know more details, they should revisit their daily Bible readings in Exodus and Leviticus. The ordinances concerning the tabernacle in the Old Testament are all types of Christ in the New Testament. We hope that by understanding these types, we may also appreciate what Christ has accomplished for us.

Let us pray together: Lord, we are so grateful that the tabernacle and the tent built by Moses in the Old Testament, along with all the items within the tabernacle, have become our spiritual reality in the New Testament. Help us to appreciate all that Jesus Christ has accomplished, especially that today He is still serving as our High Priest in the true tabernacle in heaven, helping us receive His ministry daily. Through the supply of daily manna and the illumination of the light of life, help us to live a life that aligns with God's will and to bear a good testimony for Christ on earth. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ. Amen!